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ABSTRACT

This collection of materials presents "Grandletters," a correspondence program designed to strengthen the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren separated by distance, by having them exchange 10 letters on special topics, keep a scrapbook and a journal, and do other optional activities. The materials include three separate booklets, the first containing program instructions, the second containing instructions for grandparents, and the third providing instructions for grandchildren for letters and activities on each of the following 10 topics: affection and friendship, family and heritage, generosity and love, responsibility and courage, respect for elders, honesty and commitment, helpfulness, competition and justice, conflict and violence, and sadness and grief. (SR)

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# GRANDLETTERS

*A Correspondence Program for Grandparents and their Grandchildren*

## Program Instructions

In times past, when families lived closer together and elders were an important part of family life, grandparents often shared in the excitement of childrearing. The first tooth, the first step, the first day of school—each was a tiny miracle to be cherished. Children felt a part of their grandparents' lives and were deeply affected by their loving care and attention.

Today there are changes in society and family life that can disrupt this important relationship between elders and children. Children may be separated from their grandparents by distance or by divorce. Social attitudes may quietly erode values that strengthen elder-child relationships. The grandparent may think, "Don't get involved—stay out of it. Childrearing is the parents' job," or "I don't want to pressure them to let me visit—they have lives of their own to live." Hidden within these kinds of statements is an underlying belief that children and elders do not really need contact with each other or, if they do, elders are powerless to influence the lives of the younger generation. Somehow we have to begin to reestablish and support the vital connection between elders and children.[1]

Our lives can be enriched by contact with people of all ages. Children have much to learn from their elders. For their part, elders can benefit from involvement with children by establishing a sense of connection with the younger generation and knowing they play an important role in their lives.[2]

GRANDLETTERS is a program designed to strenghten the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren who are separated by distance. The program can also be used by elders who *adopt* a *grandchild*. Children who have no natural grandparents may enjoy being a sort of "pen pal" to a special elder friend. By using the mail to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences, grandparents and grandchildren will draw closer together, learn from each other and build a reservoir of happy memories.

Ten letters are exchanged, each focusing on a special issue in the following order:

Affection and friendship
Family and heritage
Generosity and love
Responsibility and courage
Respect for elders
Honesty and commitment
Helpfulness
Competition and justice
Conflict and violence
Sadness and grief

The issues were selected by a group of elders, parents and professionals for their importance to both elders and children.

By trying some of the suggested activities and exchanging letters describing your views and experiences related to the key topic, you and your grandchild will learn more about each other. You will gain the satisfaction of knowing that your ideas are being conveyed to a young, impressionable person. For their part, grandchildren will enjoy discovering more about you. Research shows that children who have a close relationship with their grandparents are less likely to have negative stereotypes of elders or fear of growing older.

[1]See *Grandparents and Grandchildren: The Vital Connection* by Arthur Cornwallis and Kenneth L. Woodward, Doubleday and Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1981.

[2]See *Grandparenting: A Gift for Generations* by Charles A. Smith, Kansas State University Extension Publication, GT-158a.

**Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan**



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## MAKING THE PROGRAM WORK

### Choose *one* grandchild, 7 to 12 years old

This grandchild should be one who doesn't visit you too often and would benefit from the exchange. If this grandchild has brothers or sisters who also fall into this age range, you might reduce the possibility of jealousy if you start with the oldest child. Explain to the others that you hope to repeat the program with them later.

### Contact the grandchild's parents

The parents' involvement will be required with some of the grandchild's activities. Send a set of these program instructions and the Grandchild Letters/Instructions to the child's parents describing the program and how they can help. Be sure to ask them to do the following:

1. **Introduce the idea to their child.** Parents should be sure that their child understands the program. Tell him/her that—
   - your grandparent will send you a *special letter.* In this *special letter* you will hear stories about your grandparent's life and do fun activities.
   - you will keep a scrapbook. You will keep the drawings, pictures, and *special letters* your grandparent sends you in this book. Your parents will help you make the scrapbook.
   - Your grandparent will tell you what to put in the return *special letter.* With each letter, you will receive instructions for fun activities to do and ideas to write about when it's your turn.
   - If you have any questions or need help, ask your Mom or Dad.
   - Send *your* own *special letter* back to your grandparent.
2. **Read materials carefully.**
   You will send the directions for the grandchild's letters directly to the parent. Encourage them to contact you with questions.
3. **Explain to other siblings.**
   If the child has brothers or sisters, parents should explain that the grandparent can only do this correspondence with one child at a time.
4. **Help child make the scrapbook.**
   The child will need a three-ring notebook or a similar folder for holding the pictures, drawings and letters you send.
5. **Answer the child's questions.**
   Parents should be available to answer any questions the child may have about the activities. If he or she needs help carrying out the activities, parents should be ready to give encouragement, ideas, and help.
6. **Encourage their child** to talk about the *special letters.*
7. **Help with other arrangements.**
   Parents may need to help the child locate or borrow an audio-cassette recorder, help purchase audio-cassette tapes or writing materials, or help in packaging and mailing of the *special letters* and activities.

### Decide how to correspond

You may write or type your *special letters* or you may tape them with an audio-cassette recorder.

### Decide how often to correspond

Most correspondences should take place at least once every two weeks. Allow sufficient time for mailing.

### Plan the special letter

Read through all Grandparent Letters/Intructions carefully, paying special attention to the outline of the first letter and complete the checklist of activities. Discuss your ideas and thoughts and ask your grandchild to do the same about the key topic in your *special letter.* Do as many of the additional optional activities as you wish and feel free to include anything you think relates to the topic. Before mailing, listen to or read your letter to make sure you have made your points clearly.

### Mail your special letter

Address and mail the material directly to your grandchild.

### Enjoy what your grandchild sends

Be aware of your grandchild's reactions to the activities and be flexible in your future planning. Be patient. Correspondence may take longer to complete and send in than what you would hope. Contact the child's parents if the delay is more than 2 weeks to work on resolving unforeseen problems. If the child loses interest completely, don't become discouraged. Choose a different child and begin again.

### Follow-up

Let your grandchild's parents know what the course has meant to you. Record your feelings, thoughts, and reactions in your journal.

### What You Need for the Program

- 2 copies of these Program Instructions (one for you and one for the parents)
- 1 copy of the Grandparent Letters (for you)
- 1 copy of the Grandchild Letters (for grandchild)

## SCRAPBOOK AND JOURNAL

The scrapbook and journal are very important to this program. They will serve as records of both your and the child's experiences. You and your grandchild will each make your own scrapbook. You will need a three-ring notebook or a similar folder for holding your grandchild's letters. The scrapbook will include drawings, pictures, letters, and activities your grandchild has sent. At the end of the program, your grandchild will have a scrapbook containing all the materials you sent.

The journal will be a record of your personal thoughts and observations about each correspondence. You may write in the journal immediately after completing the letter and again after receiving your grandchild's letter, or you may just write in the journal after you receive your grandchild's letter. This will vary with each letter. Your reactions may either be written in a notebook or recorded on an audio-cassette tape.

Direct your comments to your grandchild as though he or she is now an adult. Imagine him or her now as a grown-up, sitting and reading your words, feeling close to you, despite the passage of many years. The journal is like a time capsule, a precious record of you to be appreciated by an adult grandchild.

At the end of your correspondence program, make a copy of the journal for yourself, if you wish, and give the original to the child's parents for safekeeping. Ask the parents to keep the journal in a safe place and to present it to your grandchild when he or she reaches adulthood and can appreciate this record of a grandparent's interest and affection.

The scrapbooks are samples of work and thought that both you and your grandchild can appreciate immediately. The journal is a personal record of your thoughts and feelings about a variety of issues, an opportunity for you to reveal what you believe to be important to a grandchild when he or she reaches adulthood.

Both the scrapbook and journal will be special treasures with lasting value. They will bring you closer to your grandchild and keep you in contact with him or her as time goes by. This program will help you and your grandchild build a firm and lasting relationship despite the distance that separates you.

## CONCLUSION

These ten letters you have exchanged will have created a strong foundation for a continuing relationship with your grandchild. When this program is over, we hope you will take the initiative to continue strengthening the relationship. If you and your grandchild have enjoyed these letters, continue corresponding. Identify goals that are relevant and important to you and your grandchild. As your grandchild grows older, examine problems and concerns that he or she faces. Think back to your childhood to find some of these concerns. Create your own activities to convey your ideas to each other.

Here are some suggestions of other ways to keep in touch:

- Continue writing letters.
- Continue exchanging cassette tapes.
- Send postcards.
- Send inexpensive gifts.
- Prepare a grandparent newspaper.
- Make phone calls.
- Plan a visit.
- Send the parent other things to store and give to the child later when he or she becomes an adult.

We are interested in hearing from you about GRANDLETTERS. What kinds of successes and problems did you have? Were the benefits worth your investment of time and effort? How did your grandchild react? Send your comments to:

Charles A. Smith, Ph.D.
Extension Specialist, Human Development
201 Umberger Hall, Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas 66506

May your words reach out to defeat time and distance to enrich the life of a special young person.

### Comments to Parents

Your support and involvement will contribute to the success of Grandletters. Read these instructions carefully and explain the program to your child. If he or she agrees to participate, let the grandparent know immediately. Make space and materials available to the child to respond to the grandparent's letters. Keep the Grandchild Letters/Instructions in a safe place and show them to the grandchild as needed. Remember, the grandparent sends his or her letter #1 then the grandchild sends his or her letter #1. When the grandparent receives this letter then he or she sends letter #2 and so on. If your child's interest waivers, encourage, but don't force them to participate.

*Grandparent Letters*

## Letter 1
# Affection and friendship

### GOALS

This letter will help you and your grandchild get to know each other better. By showing interest in the child and revealing some interesting things about yourself, you can begin to build a rewarding relationship. Children are interested in you. They would like to learn about your past and your current interests and activities. They also want you to know about the big events in their lives.

These children want to reach out to others but need patient, *accepting* adults who can support their efforts to do so. Also, keep in mind that no matter how well you know someone, there is always something interesting you can discover in him or her.

### ACTIVITIES

1. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Talk about things you like and dislike.
   - ☐ Describe your life as a child. What did you enjoy doing then? What were your friends like?
   - ☐ Describe your current friends. What qualities do you look for in a friend?
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!
2. **For your grandchild's scrapbook:**
   On a piece of typing paper draw a picture of you and your grandchild doing something fun together. On the back or the bottom of this picture describe what you are doing together. Why is it fun? Maybe you could also mention some other things you would like to do with your grandchild.
3. **In your journal** (After completing letter 1):
   Keep in mind that the journal provides you with an opportunity to speak to your grandchild as an adult. For what reasons did you decide to try this correspondence program? Describe your reactions to the activities you did. What kind of feelings did you experience? What thoughts went through your mind?

   (After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): How did your grandchild respond to your *special letter*?
4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 1 on his or her instruction sheet.

### ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES
(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *"Me" Mobile*
  Construct a mobile of symbols of special things—things you treasure (family, friends, foods, special treasures, favorites, etc.). To make a simple mobile, take a coat hanger and tie your objects to it with string or yarn. Use small objects, drawings, pictures, etc. for your symbols. Attach these objects with glue or tape to cardboard or heavy paper cut into different shapes. Punch a hole in the top of each symbol and attach a piece of yarn or string to it. On the back of each symbol, write a brief description describing why it is special. Attach a note telling the child how to make the symbols into a mobile.
- *Home Tour*
  Draw or attach one or more pictures of your home on a sheet of paper. Take your grandchild on an imaginary tour by describing your home in detail. Do you live in an old house? Does it have an attic? Is it small or large? Talk about and describe other places you have lived.

## Letter 2
# Family and Heritage

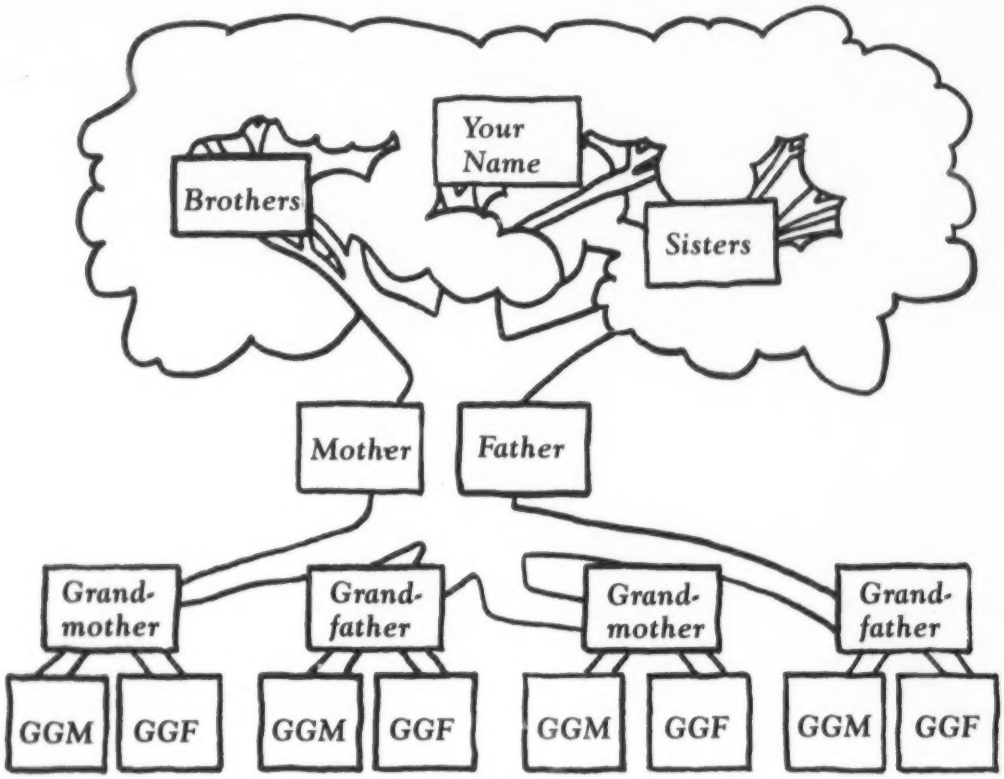
### GOALS

Children's attitudes toward the life cycle can be profoundly affected by their contact with elders. Their feelings about their own future will be influenced by the way their grandparents approach life. But children also want to establish some sense of connection with the past. What was it like before they were born? What did their parents and grandparents do when they were young? In a child's eyes, grandparents are living repositories of change and history. They have seen so many things and experienced so much of what life has to offer. Only the older generation can provide children with a glimpse of living history as seen by someone who was really there.

### ACTIVITIES

1. **Write your *Special Letter*:**

- ☐ Where and when were you born? Where did you grow up? How many brothers and sisters did you have? What did your parents do for a living?
- ☐ Discuss your growing up—games played, sports, school days, work experiences and exciting events witnessed.
- ☐ Talk about some of the dramatic changes—television, jet planes, computers, etc.—that have taken place since you were a child.
- ☐ Anything you think is important!



2. **For your grandchild's scrapbook:**
   Construct your family tree. Sketch a tree on a piece of paper. Label the branches and roots on your family tree. Write your complete name and the names of your mother and father on the tree trunk. Trace your roots on your mother's and father's sides of the family. Try to include the birth names of all female ancestors.

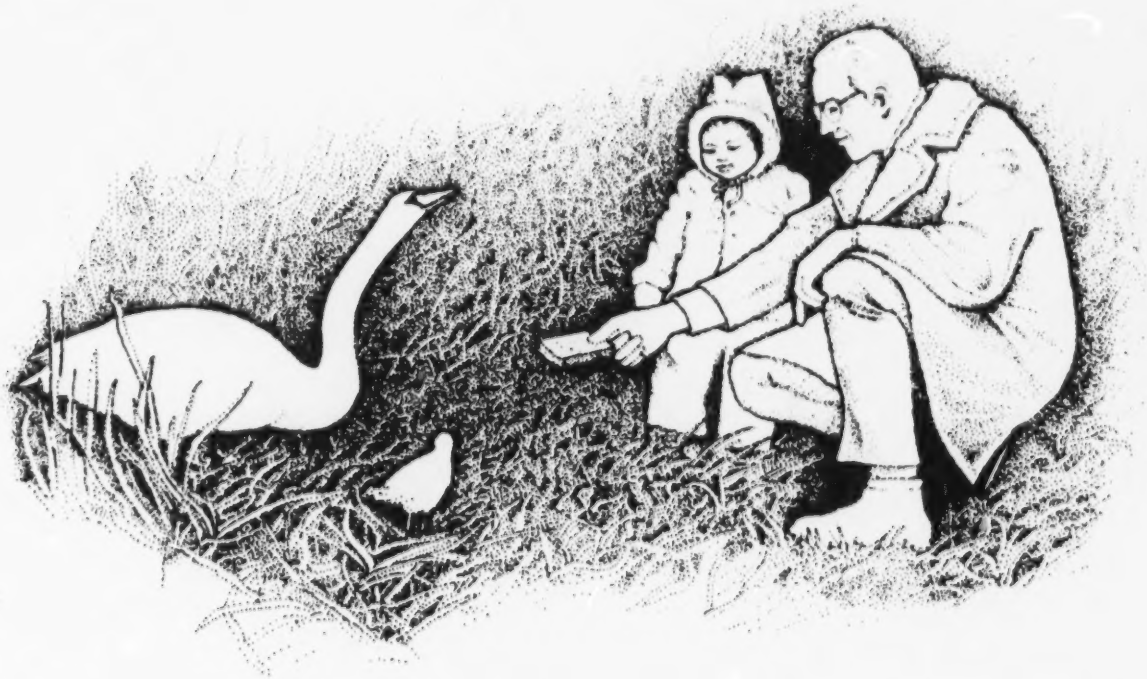
3. **In your journal** (After completing letter 2):
   Describe some of the events of your past that you think your grandchild would like to know about. Mention any stories your parents or other relatives may have told you. Talk about what life was like when you grew up.
   (After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): Identify some of the things your grandchild likes to do and contrast them with what children his or her age did when you were young.

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 2 on their instruction sheet.

## ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Decorate Your Scrapbook*
  If you completed the "Me" Mobile in Letter #1, use the symbols to decorate the cover of your scrapbook.
- *Family Picture*
  Find an old picture of yourself or your parents that you would be willing to part with or have another photo made from your copy. Place this picture on a sheet of typing paper and write a brief explanation of the picture.
- *Life Line*
  On a long strip of paper, draw a heavy horizontal line representing "Life." Mark "Birth" and the date at the left end. Mark significant pictures, momentos or brief descriptions to signify these points.
- *Something from the Past*
  Send a picture or description of something owned or made by an ancestor. Include a description of how the object was made or used.
- *Family Food*
  If you have a traditional food or dish that your mother or grandmother prepared, send the recipe to your grandchild. Explain how it became a tradition in your family.



# Letter 3
# Generosity and Love

## GOALS

Grandparents can help grandchildren learn that the bonds of affection and friendship can be strengthened by sharing and sacrifice. In the materialistic world of today, we need to find ways to nurture generosity in children. From being in contact with you children can discover that "a little bit of fragrance clings to the hands of one who gives another roses."

## ACTIVITIES

1. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Talk about people in your life who made a difference because of their caring and generosity.
   - ☐ Discuss generosity. You might tell about times you gave to others and your feelings about giving.
   - ☐ What are some qualities you see in people you love? Why are these qualities important?
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. **For your grandchild's scrapbook:**
   Cut a circle out of construction paper and write your grandchild's name in the middle. Add petals, leaves and a stem. On each of the leaves and petals write something you like or appreciate about your grandchild. Glue this "Love Flower" to a piece of paper. Briefly explain your flower on the back.

3. **In your journal** (After completing letter 3):
   Describe your ideas and feelings about generosity and friendship. What kinds of experiences did you have as a child that influenced your attitudes towards giving?
   (After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): How did your grandchild feel about love and generosity?

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 3 on his or her instruction sheet.

## ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES
(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Exchange of Gifts*
  Make a jigsaw puzzle of a picture of yourself, your house or something else you value. Paste the picture on heavy paper or lightweight cardboard. Cut it into a variety of shapes.
  or
  Make a bookmark from felt, pasting on the child's initials or make a bookmark mouse. Cut an oval of felt, add felt eyes and ears. Glue on a strand of yarn for a tail.
  or
  Paint a picture on a scrap of wood.
- *Poem or Story*
  Create a poem or write a short story describing an experience you had with giving. You could illustrate it with your own drawings or with pictures cut from magazines.
- *One-A-Day Love Packages*
  Send four or five small packages or envelopes for the child to open on certain days. You might include treats, stickers, notes, small trinkets or I.O.U.'s for future activities. On each package specify when they are to be opened and include an explanatory note.

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# Letter 4
# Responsibility and Courage

## GOALS

Overcoming fear and accepting responsibility are two of life's constant struggles. Every step of development requires us to cope with new challenges and uncertainties. Elders are in a unique position to nurture a perseverance and strength of will that will enable children to face many of life's difficulties.

## ACTIVITIES

1. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Discuss courage and the times when you acted courageously, especially when you were younger. These acts of bravery need not be dramatic. Sometimes the most difficult acts are quiet and unrecognized, like refusing to ridicule someone when everyone else does so.
   - ☐ Discuss responsibility and courage in professions such as policemen, firemen, doctors and nurses.
   - ☐ Talk about responsibility and chores. (Things like washing the dishes, taking out the trash or babysitting.) Emphasize that you have done these things because they are responsibilities and these tasks are necessary even though they may not be very enjoyable.
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. **For your grandchild's scrapbook:**
   On a sheet of paper, complete a sentence like, "It takes a lot of courage to . . . " or "Responsibilities are important because . . . " Illustrate your statements with drawings or pictures from magazines.

   or

   Write a poem or short story about courage.

3. **In your journal** (After completing letter 4):
   Describe some courageous moments you had as you were growing up. Be as specific as possible. Describe some of the responsibilities you faced as you became older.

   (After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): Do you believe courage and responsibility are important? If so, why? How did your grandchild respond to the issue?

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 4 on his or her instruction sheet.

## ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Treasure Box*
  Decorate a small box as a container for a special treasure. Leave the decision of what to put inside the box up to your grandchild. Enclose a note with a brief explanation of the box and its purpose.
- *Future Fantasy*
  Draw a picture or write a story about something you would like to do in the future or when you "grow-up." Write a brief explanation of how courage or responsibility may play an important part in this dream.

# Letter 5
# Respect for Elders

## GOALS

Research shows that children generally have a very dim view of aging. Although they have a great deal of esteem for elders, children are afraid of growing older themselves. The stereotype of infirmity and passivity during later years is common among children, but those who have contact with elders are less likely to have a negative stereotype of aging. Being close to a grandparent, for example, might provide personal experience with someone who is aging gracefully and with dignity. When children view elder friends as persons, the negative stereotype diminishes. By becoming involved in their lives you can help children realize that aging is no tragedy, that they can look forward with hope and confidence to their own future.

## ACTIVITIES

1. **Write your *Special Letter*:**

   ☐ Emphasis the idea that people can continue learning and enjoying life throughout their later years. Each stage of life signals a change—new opportunities emerge as previous activities become less important. People can be creative and childlike at any age.
   ☐ Tell about some of the fun activities that you and your friends take part in.
   ☐ Mention some of the major changes you experienced as you grew up.
   ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. **For your grandchild's scrapbook:**
   Look through several magazines to find pictures of elders involved in various kinds of activities. Cut them out and paste the pictures on paper. If you cannot find any pictures, draw a picture of an activity you enjoy. Write brief explanations of these activities.

3. **In your journal** (After completing letter 5):
   Describe what growing older has meant to you. What are some of the major changes you experienced as you grew up? How have you responded to these changes?
   (After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): Are there any important ideas about aging you would like to mention to your grandchild? How did your grandchild respond to this issue?
4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 5 on his or her instruction sheet.

## ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Making a Mosaic*
  Save eggshells; wash and dry. Dip the shells in food coloring, using several colors. After spreading them out to dry crush the eggshells into small pieces. Draw a design on a sheet of paper and glue the colored shells into a mosaic. Write a brief explanation of mosaics and how they have lasted for a long time as decorations on buildings.

- *Elders Can*
  Show your grandchild pictures of several objects made by elders in your community or by yourself. Attach these pictures to paper and include brief descriptions on them. Emphasize to the child that these things are possible because of the years of experience an older person can apply to the work.

- *Grandpicture*
  Draw a portrait of your grandchild. Write a brief description of what you like about him or her.

# Letter 6
# Honesty and Commitment

## GOALS

The fabric of our society is held together by the trust we have in each other. Each of us moves through the day expressing confidence in others and demonstrating our own trustworthiness. For example, when we drive a car, eat at a restaurant, and leave our children with a babysitter, we place trust in others. Our childrearing typically places a great deal of emphasis on this dependability.

We want our children to recognize the importance of giving their word to others. In their relationships with children, elders can nurture this sense of responsibility.

## ACTIVITIES

1. **Write your *Special Letter*:**

   - ☐ Describe what a *lie* and *dishonesty* mean.
   - ☐ Describe a time in your childhood when you lied. How did you feel about lying? Did you get caught?
   - ☐ Describe a situation when someone lied to you. How did this make you feel? Do you trust that person today?
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. **For your grandchild's scrapbook:**
   Draw the outline of several balloons on a piece of paper. Inside each balloon write a truthful statement, such as, "I really like you." or "I am your Grandma." In a brief explanation, stress that telling a lie to someone is like popping a balloon—one moment we think we have something, but the next moment it is no longer there.

3. **In your journal** (After completing letter 6):
   Describe some of your strong beliefs about honesty and commitment. Do we always have to be completely honest? Can honesty ever be cruel?

   (After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): What kinds of principles do you hope your grandchild will acquire regarding these issues as he or she grows older?

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 6 on his or her instruction sheet.

## ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES
(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Balloon Person*
  Write your grandchild's name on a balloon with a felt tipped marker and draw his or her picture on it. Attach the balloon to a piece of paper with tape. Write a short note asking your grandchild to watch the picture change as the balloon is blown up. Also make a list of ways you keep the special commitments you have to your friends.
- *Tall Tales*
  This activity may work better if an audio-cassette recorder is used. Playing this game is a humorous way to encourage your grandchild to reflect on the truthfulness of what he or she says. Emphasize that although *tall tales* can be fun to make up, they can hurt if the stories mislead others. Tell your grandchild that you are going to say something that is true or false and he or she will have to guess which it is. Be outrageous in your descriptions, making up an elaborate story. Ask your grandchild to guess which stories are true and false and then reveal the correct answers at the end.

# Letter 7
# Helpfulness

## GOALS

To teach children to be helpful, we have to do at least two things. First, we have to help them learn the skills involved in helping others with various tasks; second, we have to give them opportunities to practice being helpful even when their efforts may not contribute to completing the task.

For example, to learn how to clean up after dinner, children have to know how to clear the table, wipe it clean and wash and dry the dishes. Someone has to show or tell them how to do these things. Also, someone has to encourage them to help with mealtime cleanup even though their "help" may cause more work at first. Because elders may have more time and patience than many parents, they can be especially effective in nurturing a sense of helpfulness in children.

## ACTIVITIES

1. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Discuss things that people do for you that you feel are helpful. Talk about acceptable ways to go about helping someone else.
   - ☐ Give suggestions of things your grandchild can do for his or her parents, neighbors, teachers, etc. to help out.
   - ☐ Tell how you feel when you do something to help someone else out.
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. **For your grandchild's scrapbook:**
   Draw a picture of you helping your grandchild with a task. At the bottom of the page identify what is happening in the picture.

3. **In your journal** (After completing letter 7):
   Talk about some of the people who helped you while you were growing up. What did they do? What effect did they have on you? Talk about the importance of helping. Why should a person learn to help others?

   (After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): How have your grandchild's letters helped you? How have yours helped him or her?

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any additional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 7 on his or her instruction sheet.

## ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Nature Walk*
  Go out for a walk. Look for interesting twigs, rocks, leaves, etc. Arrange the rocks and other things to make "helpful people" or objects. Add decorative touches with paint to indicate eyes, nose, hair and other body features.
- *Helpful Hands*
  Paint the palms of your hands and fingers. Make a print. Explain at the bottom of the page the many ways your hands can be helpful.

# Letter 8
# Competition and Justice

## GOALS

All too often in our society, children identify with personal success. The performance of another person becomes more important than their own improvement. Research shows that grade school children can become so preoccupied with winning that they are willing to sacrifice their own personal gain to ensure failure by others. We can help children realize that learning and personal growth should never be sacrificed for winning and that competition can be used as a challenge to improve rather than as a opportunity to defeat someone else.

## ACTIVITIES

1. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Talk about competition, possibly as it relates to sports or exhibiting at fairs. Tell how you felt competing.
   - ☐ Talk about good and bad competition and good and bad winners and losers.
   - ☐ Talk about competition and how it can be used as a challenge to improve.
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. **For your grandchild's scrapbook:**
   Enlarge the illustration of the first place ribbon on a piece of construction paper. Cut it out, making a number 1 or 1st Place in the center.

   or

   Gather a length of ribbon and cover a button with ribbon, making a number 1 in the center. Attach the gathered ribbon to the button to make a rosette. Attach streamers at the bottom with glue.

   Attach the ribbon to a piece of paper for the scrapbook. On this paper write the reasons why you think your grandchild is number 1 for you.

3. **In your journal** (After completing letter 8):
   How do you feel about competition? What was your experience with competition and cooperation as a child? Can you remember and describe any childhood incidents that made an impression on you?

   (After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): Are there any ideas about winning and losing you would like to convey? How did your grandchild respond to this issue?
4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any optional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 8 on his or her instruction sheet.

## ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Compare Collages*
  Cut small angular pieces from assorted colors of tissue paper. Glue an overlapping collage design on paper or cardboard. Frame it. On the back of the picture offer suggestions to your grandchild to improve and create his or her own collage to send to you. Explain how the collages can be different, emphasizing that each will be special in its own way. Also, each will show the abilities and interests of the person who made it.

- *Competition Improvement*
  Make a list of activities that you compete in. After each item write a brief explanation of ways you can improve in this activity.

# Letter 9
# Conflict and Violence

## GOALS

Power is both fascinating and frightening to children. In the world of adults, children may resent their own position of weakness and vulnerability. In their relationships with their friends, children seek to establish a position of influence and strength typically overlooked or belittled by adults. We can help children learn that they really do have something to offer others and that their emerging sense of power can be harnessed to serve positive ends. Elders are in a good position to nurture this outlook in children.

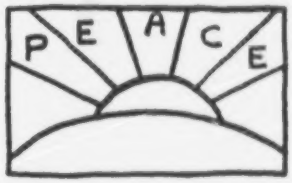
## ACTIVITIES

1. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Discuss ways to solve conflicts. What are some good and bad ways to solve conflicts? How do you solve your conflicts or problems?
   - ☐ Talk about peace and your wartime memories.
   - ☐ Tell about a time when you were involved in a fight or some other conflict when you were young. What happened? How did you solve the conflict?
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!
2. **For your grandchild's scrapbook:**
   Draw a picture of a time when you were in a fight and hurt by someone during your childhood. At the bottom of your picture describe what happened to you and how you solved the conflict (if at all).
3. **In your journal** (After completing letter 9):
   Talk about your ideas and feelings regarding conflict, peace and cooperation. What experiences did you have in growing up that influenced your opinions on these issues?
   (After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): How did your grandchild react to this topic?
4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any optional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 9 on his her instruction sheet.

## ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *Special Code*
  Make up your own secret code. You, the grandparent will make up simple symbols for the first thirteen letters of the alphabet. Keep a copy of the code for yourself and send a copy to your grandchild. Ask him or her to make up the remaining thirteen letters and send you a copy of them. Now you can send "secret" messages.
- *Peace Banner*
  You will need fabric or felt, colored paper or plain paper and crayons or watercolors. Decide on a peace design, such as those illustrated. Create a peace banner.



# Letter 10
# Sadness and Grief

## GOALS

Loss is never easy to accept, at any age. Children may have a particularly difficult time dealing with loss because they do not understand the long-range implications of what has happened. But elders have experienced more of life and can share their experiences with young people. Also, from their position of authority, elders can encourage children to express honest grief and respond with care to the suffering of others. Elders can help children understand that expressing sadness is one way to heal a hurt.

## ACTIVITIES

1. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Describe some of the things a person might do to express sadness, such as crying, going for a quiet walk, talking to someone, or praying.
   - ☐ Talk about some of the times you were sad and what you did to deal with your feelings.
   - ☐ Talk about things that make you happy.
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

2. **For your grandchild's scrapbook:**
   Draw a diagonal line from corner to corner across a sheet of paper. Paste a yellow construction paper sun in the upper half and a blue construction paper cloud on the lower half. Cut out pictures from magazines that portray something that brightens or saddens you. Paste these pictures on the pages depending on the feeling you assign them. On the back of the page explain why these things brighten or sadden you.

3. **In your journal** (After completing letter 10):
   Describe some of your ideas about sadness. How have you coped with losses in your life? How did your parents react to loss?
   (After receiving your grandchild's *special letter*): How did your grandchild react to this topic? When you complete your journal send it to your grandchild's parents for safekeeping.

4. Mail segments 1 and 2 and any optional activities listed below directly to your grandchild. Ask your grandchild to respond with letter 10 on his or her instruction sheet.

## ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES
(Choose as many of these as you wish to do)

- *"Feeling" Badges*
  Design badges of various sizes and shapes. Attach labels of feelings like sad, excited or happy to them. Find a picture in magazines to match these feelings.
- *Tree of Life*
  Draw the trunk and branches of a tree on a large sheet of paper. Make some leaves of construction paper. Label some of the leaves with names of living things. Attach these to the branches. Label the other leaves with names of things that have died and place them on the ground under the tree.
- *Writing How You Feel*
  Make decorated note paper from folded sheets of paper. (Collect tiny flowers ahead of time and press them.) Glue these on the stationery or using crayons or markers, draw flowers on the stationery.

*Grandchild Letters*

# Letter Fun for Grandchildren

Your parents have visited with you about a fun project. In the months ahead, you will be receiving special letters from your grandparents. They want to do this so you can get to know more about them and they will learn to know more about you.

After you get a letter from your grandparents, you of course will need to answer them. Your grandparents want to know about what you like to do, something about your friends, your feelings, you dreams, what you like to play, about your school, and so many other things. And you will learn more about what they did when they were young and how much they love and cherish you.

Your parents will help you if you want them to. They will help you collect ideas, explain the letters if that is needed, prepare a scrapbook to keep all the things your grandparent sends to you, and make drawings, pictures, and small objects to send to your grandparents.

I hope you get as much fun out of this program as your grandparents will. As you grow older, you will learn to appreciate more and more what your grandparents think and feel. Good luck!

Charles A. Smith
Extension Specialist
Human Development

Gayla Gutsch
Student, Family and Child Development

**Cooperative Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan**

## Letter 1
# Affection and Friendship

### Things To Do

1. Read your *special letter* from your grandparent.
2. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Talk about what you like and dislike. You could make two lists, one for your likes and one for your dislikes. Then explain what you like or dislike about the first few items on your lists.
   - ☐ Tell about your friends. What do you do together? What do you like about your friends?
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!
3. **For your grandparent's scrapbook:**
   On a sheet of white paper, draw a picture of you and your grandparent doing something fun together. On the bottom or back of this picture describe what you are doing together. Why is it fun? Mention other things you would like to do with your grandparent.
4. **Optional Activities** (Choose as many as you want to do):
   - *"Me" Mobile*
     Construct a mobile of special things—things you treasure (family, friends, foods, special treasures, favorites, etc.). To make a simple mobile, take a coat hanger and tie your objects to it with string or yarn. Use small objects, drawings, pictures, etc. to show what is special for you. Attach these objects with glue or tape to cardboard or heavy paper cut into different shapes. Punch a hole in the top of each shape and attach a piece of yarn or string to it. On the back of each picture write a brief description telling why it is special.
   - *Silhouette*
     Draw an outline of a shape (circle, square, etc.) onto a piece of construction paper. Use drawings, pictures and magazine cut-out pictures of hobbies, interests or places you like to visit. Paste these in a collage over the outline. You may wish to write a brief description explaining the pictures.
5. Mail your letter and anything else you made to your grandparent.

## Letter 2
# Family and Heritage

### Things To Do

1. Read your *special letter* from your grandparent.
2. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Talk about your growing up—tell about games you play, sports you like, school activities and other things you like to do.
   - ☐ Tell about your family. What kinds of things do you do together.
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!
3. **For your grandparent's scrapbook:**
   Draw a picture of a tree on a sheet of paper. Include the trunk, branches, leaves and roots. On the back of your picture identify family members that belong to your own family "tree" including your parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives. If you are not sure what a "family tree" is ask your parents for help.
4. **Optional Activities** (Choose as many as you want to do):
   - *Decorate your Scrapbook*
     If you have a scrapbook of things your grandparent is sending you take time to decorate it.
   - *Picture Time*
     Find a picture of yourself or your family that you can give to your grandparent. Place it on a sheet of paper. Write a brief explanation of the picture at the bottom of the page.
   - *Life Line*
     On a long strip of paper, draw a heavy horizontal line representing "Life." Mark "Birth" and the date at the left end. Mark significant events, achievements and other points along the line. If you wish add pictures or momentos or brief descriptions to explain these points.
5. Mail your letter and anything else you made to your grandparent.

## Letter 3
# Generosity and Love

### Things To Do

1. Read your *special letter* from your grandparent.

2. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Talk about people in your life who make you feel special because they care about you and do nice things for you.
   - ☐ Tell about times when you gave to others or shared and how you felt about doing this.
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

3. **For your grandparent's scrapbook:**
   Cut a circle out of construction paper and write your grandparent's name in the middle. Add petals, leaves and a stem. On each of the leaves and petals write something you like or appreciate about your grandparent. Glue this "Love Flower" to a piece of paper. Briefly explain your flower on the back of the paper.

4. **Optional Activities** (Choose as many as you want to do):
   - *Exchange of Gifts*
     Make a jigsaw puzzle of a picture of yourself, your house or something else of interest to you. Paste the picture on heavy paper or lightweight cardboard. Cut it into a variety of shapes.

     or

     Make a bookmark from felt, pasting on your grandparent's initials or make a bookmark mouse. Cut an oval of felt, and felt eyes and ears. Glue on a strand of yarn for a tail.

     or

     Paint a picture on a scrap of wood.
   - *Poem or Story*
     Create a poem or short story describing an experience you had with giving. You could illustrate it with your own drawings or with pictures cut from magazines.

5. Mail your letter and anything else you made to your grandparent.

## Letter 4
# Responsibility and Courage

### Things To Do

1. Read your *special letter* from your grandparent.

2. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Tell about a time when acted courageously. How did you feel about what happened?
   - ☐ Talk about the chores you are responsible for.
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

3. **For your grandparent's scrapbook:**
   On a sheet of paper, complete a sentence like, "It takes a lot of courage to . . . " or "Responsibility is important because . . . " Illustrate your statements with drawings or pictures from magazines.

   or

   Write a poem or short story about courage.

4. **Optional Activities** (Choose as many as you want to do):
   - *Future Fantasy*
     Draw a picture or write a story about something you would like to do in the future or when you grow up. Write a brief explanation of how courage or responsibility may play an important part in this dream for your future.
   - *Responsibilities As You Grow*
     Cut pictures out of magazines of challenges you may have to face as you grow up. Glue these pictures to sheets of paper. Under these pictures describe how you feel about these challenges.

5. Mail your letter and anything else you made to your grandparent.

## Letter 5
# Respect for Elders

### Things To Do

1. Read your *special letter* from your grandparent.

2. **Write your *Special Letter:***
   - ☐ Describe what you think are the major changes in a person's life as they become older adults. Identify the problems you think grandparents may have. What skills might actually improve with age?
   - ☐ Tell about elderly people you know who have special skills or are very active. What is special about your grandparent?
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

3. **For your grandparent's scrapbook:**
   Draw a picture of some activity that you think is interesting or would like to see your grandparent try. Write a brief explanation of your drawing.

4. **Optional Activities** (Choose as many as you want to do):
   - *Making a Mosaic*
     Save eggshells; wash and dry. Dip the shells in food coloring, using several colors. Spread them out to dry. Crush the eggshells after they dry. Draw a design on a sheet of paper and glue the colored shells into a mosaic. To do this glue them with their edges almost touching each other.
   - *Grandpicture*
     Draw a portrait of your grandparent, using pictures you have of him or her. On the back write things you like about your grandparent.

5. Mail your letter and anything else you made to your grandparent.

## Letter 6
# Honesty and Commitment

### Things To Do

1. Read your *special letter* from your grandparent.

2. **Write your *Special Letter:***
   - ☐ Tell about a time when you lied or wanted to lie. How did you feel about lying?
   - ☐ Describe a time when someone lied to you. How did you feel about this?
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

3. **For your grandparent's scrapbook:**
   Draw the outline of several balloons on a piece of paper. Inside each balloon write a truthful statement, such as, "I really like you," or "I am your grandson."

4. **Optional Activities** (Choose as many as you want to do):
   - *Tall Tales*
     Write your own tall tale. Be outrageous in your descriptions by making up a wild story. You could describe something that really happened to you or invent something new. Ask your grandparent to guess whether your story is true or a *tall tale.*
   - *Special Commitments*
     Make a list of ways you keep the special commitments you have to your friends, showing them you are a good friend.

5. Mail your letter and anything else you made to your grandparent.

## Letter 7
# Helpfulness

### Things To Do

1. Read your *special letter* from your grandparent.

2. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Make a list of helpful things you do for your parents, neighbors, teachers, etc. How do you feel when you do these things?
   - ☐ Describe things that people do for you that help you out. How do you feel when people help you?
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!

3. **For your grandparent's scrapbook:**
   Draw a picture of you helping your grandparent with a task. At the bottom of the page identify what is happening in the picture.

4. **Optional Activities** (Choose as many as you want to do):
   - *Nature Walk*
     Go out for a walk. Look for interesting twigs, rocks, leaves, etc. Arrange the rocks and other things to make *helpful* people or objects. Add decorative touches with paint to indicate eyes, nose, hair, and other body features.
   - *Helping Hands*
     Paint the palms of your hands and fingers. Make a print. Explain at the bottom of the page the ways these hands can be helpful.
5. Mail your letter and anything else you have made to your grandparent.

## Letter 8
# Competition and Justice

### Things To Do

1. Read your *special letter* from your grandparent.
2. **In your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Talk about competing, maybe in sports or exhibiting at fairs. Describe how you feel competing.
   - ☐ Tell about times when you won and lost. Were you a good or bad winner or loser?
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!
3. **For your grandparent's scrapbook:**
   Enlarge the illustration of the first place ribbon on a piece of construction paper. Cut it out, making #1 or 1st Place in the center.

   or

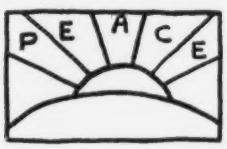
   Gather a length of ribbon and cover a button with ribbon, making a #1 in the center. Attach the gathered ribbon to the bottom to make a rosette. Attach steamers at the bottom with glue.

   Attach the ribbon to a piece of paper for the scrapbook. On this paper write the reasons why you think your grandparent is #1 for you.
4. **Optional Activities** (Choose as many as you want to do):
   - *Compare Collages*
     Cut small angular pieces from assorted colors of tissue paper. Glue an overlapping collage design on paper or cardboard. Frame it. On the back of the picture explain what improvements you made on the collage.
   - *Competition Improvement*
     Make a list of activities that you compete in. After each item write a brief explanation of ways you can improve in this activity.
5. Mail your letter and anything else you made to your grandparent.

## Letter 9
# Conflict and Violence

### Things To Do

1. Read your *special letter* from your grandparent.
2. **In your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Tell about a time when you were involved in a fight or disagreement. What happened? How did you solve the conflict?
   - ☐ Discuss ways to solve conflicts. How do you solve your conflicts or problems with parents or friends?
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!
3. **For your grandparent's scrapbook:**
   Draw a picture of a time when you were in a fight or hurt by someone. At the bottom of your picture describe what happened to you and show how you solved the conflict.
4. **Optional Activities** (Choose as many as you want to do):
   - *Special Code*
     Your grandparent may send you a special code for the first thirteen letters of the alphabet. If they send this you can finish by deciding on the code for the last thirteen letters. For example if the letters L=1, E=9, V=!, and O=& then what does this say in code—1&!9?
   - *Peace Banner*
     You will need fabric or felt, colored paper or plain paper and crayons or watercolors. Decide on a peace design, such as those illustrated below:



5. Mail your letter and anything else you made to your grandparent.

## Letter 10
# Sadness and Grief

### Things To Do

1. Read your *special letter* from your grandparent.
2. **Write your *Special Letter*:**
   - ☐ Talk about some of the times you were sad and what you did to deal with your feelings.
   - ☐ Talk about things that you feel happy about.
   - ☐ Tell your grandparent what you liked about your letter exchange. What did you learn about yourself and him or her? Tell your grandparent how you feel about him or her.
   - ☐ Anything you think is important!
3. **For your grandparent's scrapbook:**
   Draw a diagonal line from corner to corner across a sheet of paper. Paste a yellow construction paper sun in the upper half and a blue construction paper cloud on the lower half. Cut out pictures from magazines that portray something that brightens or saddens you. Paste these pictures on the upper or lower part of the page depending on the feeling you assign them. On the back of the page explain why these things brighten or sadden your day.
4. **Optional Activities** (Choose as many as you want to do):
   - *"Feeling" Badges*
     Design badges of various sizes and shapes. Attach labels of feelings like sad, excited or happy to them. Find a picture in magazines to match these feelings.
   - *Tree of Life*
     Draw the trunk and branches of a tree on a large sheet of paper. Make some leaves of construction paper. Label some of the leaves with names of living things. Attach these to the branches. Label the other leaves with names of things that have died and place them on the ground under the tree.
5. Mail your letter and anything else you made to your grandparent.

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